

Ladakh: To Study the Pastoral Changpa Nomadic Life of Changthang Region Jammu and Kashmir

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ABSTRACT

The present study was conducted in Changthang region of Ladakh with the aim of studying the migration and its socio-cultural impact on women and children of Changpa nomads. The sample for the study was drawn from Nyoma block of Changthang region. Total 190 households were selected for the study area. Purposive and random sampling technique was used for seven villages of Nyoma block of Leh district. The study found that Changthang is a unique part of Ladakh which has extreme climate and is at a high altitude. The average altitude of the area is around 14600 metres above sea level. The findings of the study reveal that all the (100%) respondents from seven villages (i.e. women and children of Changpa nomads) were staying in yak wool tents (rebo) which were made from traditionally yak wool without electricity till date and they wholly and solely depend on emergency solar lights during dark hours of night. Study also reveals that all the respondents of Changpa nomads use wood and animal (sheep, yak, goat etc.) excreta as fuel in their traditional chullahs for cooking as well as for heating purpose because it was easily available there as well as it was economical. The study also reveals the types of marriage among women in Changthang that 13.3% of respondents believe in polyandry form of marriage as this way the property is not divided and it remains in the same family. Polyandry was prevalent only in the age group of 35 - 50 years which clearly indicates that earlier generation believed in polyandry and these respondents had two husbands and all husbands were brothers in relation. Whereas the present generation do not believe in polyandry system of marriage.

Keywords: Changpa, Nomads, Social, Culture, Changthang

INTRODUCTION

“Changthang is a Tibetan word meaning northern plain or plateau”: Chang “means north, and thang or tang means “plain”. The Changpa are thus northerners (Rosing, 2006). It is an elevated altitude plateau of Leh district of Ladakh Region, bordering by Tibet (China) in the east, with huge highlands and vast lakes.



Figure 1: Changthang is situated in the eastern part of Ladakh in Jammu and Kashmir State, northern India

“The people of the Changtang are nomadic pastoralists, they are known as 'Changpa', for 'northerners,' or 'Drukpa' for 'nomads' in Tibetan. The people are divided into two sections. One is called Rongpa (Yulpa)—that is to say, ‘dwellers in villages,’ and the other, the Changpa, meaning ‘dwellers in the desert’. The Changpas are a nomadic pastoral community who rare animals they move from place to place across the Changthang, staying in yak wool tents (rebos)”. The people of Changthang, the Changpas are of Tibetan race are not different from other Ladakhis in their customs and religion. “The Changpas speak Changkyet/Chanskat, a Tibetan dialect (Bhasin, 201 2)”.

II. CLIMATE OF CHANGTHANG

“In Changthang, winters are cold and Arctic-like, despite the latitude, due to the high elevation and very harsh with temperatures falling to -40°C associated with heavy snowfalls and bitter winds. During the brief summer, temperatures are high in the day, but fall to around 0°C at night. The remoteness and relatively low productivity due to low temperatures and dry climate have left it relatively little exploited. (Thsangpa, 2000)”

Due to the high altitude and the rarefied air, there was a high degree of radiation in Ladakh and there is a local saying;

“Only in Ladakh can a person who has his head in the sun and his feet in the shadow endure both sunstroke and frostbite at the same time” (Ladakh book of records, 2000)”

The main economic income of Changpa nomads is livestock and each family rears hundreds of pashmina goats' Changthangi sheep and yak. Changpa nomads of the Changthang produce the finest pashmina wool in the world, which is the thin and fine inner wool from the changra goat. Pashmina is also known as cashmere, and the fine quality is due to the harsh climate on the high mountain plateau where the goats are reared. (Goodall, 2003 and ICIMOD 1998). An average family owns over one to two hundred goats and sheep, several yaks and a few horses. Nomads of Changthang people distribution of grazing lands for livestock, each community follows a year round migration cycle, living in a rebo and grazing their herds of sheep, goats, yaks and horses on communally regulated allotted pastures. They usually make and break a camp about six to ten times a year, making only short moves between a series of camping grounds. (Chaudhuri, 2000)



Figure 2: Pashmina goat of Changthang (changra goat)

III.METHODOLOGY

The present study was conducted in Changthang region Leh District of Ladakh J&K state. Ladakh is divided into two main districts, Leh and Kargil. Leh District is located at a distance of 430 Kms from Srinagar and 235 Kms from Kargil. The present investigation, a set of sample was drawn from Changthang region of Nyoma block of Leh district. The sample for the study was drawn from seven nomadic villages namely, Hanley, Koyul, Korzok, Samad, Kharnak, Angkung and Sumdo of Changthang region. The information sources for the study was primary as well as secondary sources. The secondary data was obtained from various published sources of journals, magazines', prospects, books, and different websites. The secondary data was used only after through scrutiny. The primary data for the study was collected from seven nomadic villages of Changthang region from Nyoma block of Leh district. Participatory observation and interview Schedule were used to collect the data.

IV.RESULT AND DISCUSSION**Basic essential facilities****Table 1: Type of House**

House	Koyul		Korzok		Sumdo		Kharnak		Angkung		Samad		Hanlay		Overall Total	
	n=61	%	n=11	%	n=3	%	n=48	%	n=3	%	n=105	%	n=9	%	n=50	%
			6		7				9				6		2	
Kaccha (mud house)	-		-		-		-		-		-		-		-	
Tent (rebo)	61	100	116	100	37	100	48	100	39	100	105	100	96	100	502	100
Total	61	100	116	100	37	100	48	100	39	100	105	100	96	100	502	100

The data presented in Table 1 reveal that from all the seven villages 100% of respondents (i.e., women and children of Changpa nomads) were staying in yak wool tents (rebo) which were made from traditionally yak wool. All the respondents noted that they stayed comfortably in rebo (tent).

Table 2: Access to electricity facilities

Electricity Facilities	Koyul		Korzok		Sumdo		Kharnak		Angkung		Samad		Hanlay		Overall total	
	n=61	%	n=116	%	n=37	%	n=48	%	n=39	%	n=105	%	n=96	%	n=502	%
Yes	-		-		-		-		-		-		-		-	
No	61	100	116	100	37	100	48	100	39	100	105	100	96	100	502	100

Total	61	10	116	10	37	10	48	10	39	10	105	10	96	10	502	10
		0		0		0		0		0		0		0		0

Table2 presents the data related to access of electricity, 100 % of the respondents from all the seven villagers said that there was no electricity till date and depend on solar lights during dark hours of night.

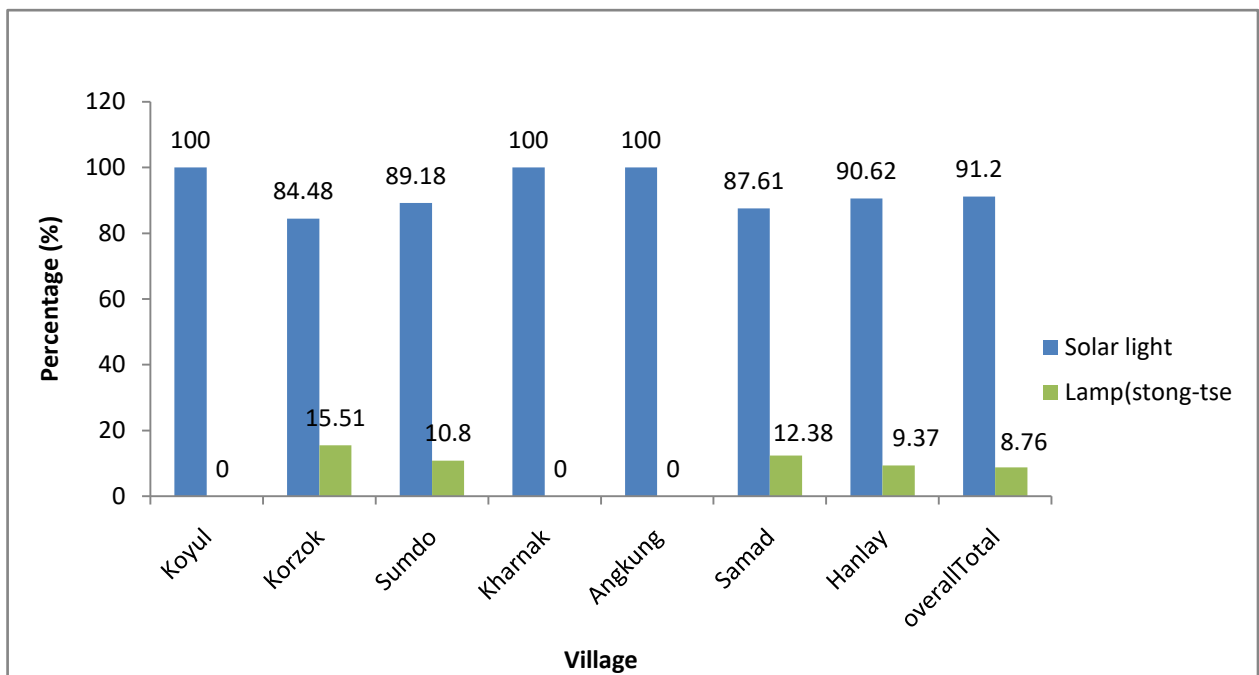


Figure. 3: Primary Source of lighting the house.

Figure 1.3 depicts that majority which is 91.2% of the respondents from all villages were using solar lights. They use an advanced “cardboard” solar panel, whereas only 8.76 % of the respondents use local lamps (stongtse) due to unavailability of solar plate.

Table 3:Heating facility

Source of heating	Koyul		Korzok		Sumdo		Kharnak		Angkung		Samad		Hanlay		Overall total	
	n=61	%	n=116	%	n=37	%	n=48	%	n=39	%	n=105	%	n=96	%	n=502	%

Bukhari	61	100	116	100	37	100	48	100	39	100	105	100	96	100	502	100
Heating	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	61	100	116	100	37	100	48	100	39	100	105	100	96	100	502	100

Table 3 reveals that 100% of respondents used bukhari for the heating purpose. They used wood and animal dung as fuel in bukhari. Bukhari was used for dual purpose i.e. for cooking as well as for heating the room.

Table 4: Primary fuel source for cooking

Source of Cooking	Koyul		Korzok		Sumdo		Kharnak		Angkung		Samad		Hanlay		Overall total	
	n=61	%	n=116	%	n=37	%	n=48	%	n=39	%	n=105	%	n=96	%	n=502	%
Kerosene	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Wood/animal dung	61	100	116	100	37	100	48	100	39	100	105	100	96	100	502	100
Total	61	100	116	100	37	100	48	100	39	100	105	100	96	100	502	100

Table 4 reveals that 100% of respondents use wood and animal (sheep, yak, goat etc.) excreta as fuel in their traditional chullahs because it was easily available there as well as it was economical.

Table 5: Marriage type

Type of marriage	Koyul		Korzok		Sumdo		Kharnak		Angkung		Samad		Hanlay		Overall Total	
	n=31	%	n=58	%	n=19	%	n=29	%	n=23	%	n=62	%	n=56	%	n=278	%
Monogamy	25	90.32	50	86.2	14	73.68	24	82.75	17	78.26	58	93.54	53	94.64	241	(86.69)
Polygamy	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

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Polyandry	6	9.67	8	13.7	5	26.31	5	17.24	6	21.7	4	6.45	3	5.35	37(13.3)
Total	31	100	58	100	19	100	29	100	23	100	62	100	56	100	278(100)
No. of husbands in case of polyandry															

2	6	19.35	8	13.79	5	26.31	5	17.24	6	26.08	4	6.45	3	5.35	37(13.3)
3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	6	19.35	8	13.79	5	26.31	5	17.24	6	26.08	4	6.45	3	5.35	37(13.3)
Relationship of husbands with each other															
Husband's brother	6	19.35	8	13.79	5	26.31	5	17.24	6	26.08	4	6.45	3	5.35	37(13.3)
Cousin	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	6	19.35	8	13.79	5	26.31	5	17.24	6	26.08	4	6.45	3	5.35	37(13.3)

It is evident from the above table that 13.3 % of respondents believe in polyandry form of marriage because through that way the property is not divided and it remains in the same family. Polyandry was prevalent only in the age group of 35 - 50 years which clearly indicates that earlier generation believed in polyandry whereas the present generation do not believe in polyandry system of marriage. Regarding number of husbands 13.3% of respondents had two husbands and all husbands were brothers in relation.

V.CONCLUSION

The Changpas are a nomadic pastoral who rear livestock and move from place to place across the Changthang, staying in yak wool tents (rebos). Changthang which is the home for pastoral nomads.. They faced many challenges in their life in aspect of everything like, children health, women health, and many other basic necessities and cause major impact on their social, economical life.

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